
The Lighthouse

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MISSION WORK REPORT – BENIN

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF 2007

2007 had been good for the Benin churches but not as good as I personally expect. My personal disappointment is that we gained in new congregations but lost members in some of the old congregations. As I mentioned in previous reports, to encourage our outreach thrust, we have divided Benin into 6 geographical regions. As expected, some are not statistically conscious at all and have difficulty giving me actual figures on baptisms and attendance records. For record purposes I am listing the regions and the towns and villages in which we have congregations. Attendance is growing rapidly in the Agon congregation with their new building. My big joy is in the return on the congregation in Akpakpa-Agbodjedo into our fold. Two years ago, they left our movement to join forces with the "one cup" group. I did all I can to prevent them from leaving at that time. They told me they have been promised \$10,000 to build a meeting place. In my frustration, I told them I was coming to collect our worship furniture. I did not, but kept contact with a leading member. One Sunday in November, they called me that things are not going well and wanted to meet me. Their new preacher is lazy, the financial promises were deceptions, and they have ceased worshipping, and want to come back if we would accept them. This congregation of over 30 members in 2006 now had 3 at worship on December 16. At our first worship with them on 26 January we had 10 in attendance and gradually the old members are coming back. This is a big victory for us. These brethren told me they had been ashamed to call me. They started visiting nearby denominational churches but did not feel comfortable in those worship atmospheres. They had decided not to worship with any other religious group but stay at home and go to hell. We did a good job initially in grounding these brethren in the faith that they just cannot accept any doctrine or stay away despite all the bad things said about me to lead them astray, they came back. This event made my year 2007.

The number of young people being added to the churches is very encouraging. They hold their camp meetings twice a year and it is just encouraging to see hundreds of these young men and women together studying and praising God. For now most of these young men and women do not have a solid financial base but that is coming. The church in Benin has a great future.

Some members in the English speaking church because discouraged when for the umpteenth time they lost their meeting place. They have to move into the very small sitting room of their minister. Several members got frustrated and decided to stay home.

We lost members in the Church at Ouidah where one of the BTC students preaches and teaches. He converted a man who offered his home for the church to worship. From a growing congregation of 60 members, we now have only 20. The reason is that the man in whose house the church meets had been a member of a sect (The Unification Church of the Korean preacher called Moon) that believed that the first sin reported in the Bible as the eating of a physical fruit is actually Adam and Eve committing fornication before they were legally married by God and a host of other similar errors. When our preacher finished preaching this man would begin contradicting him and this would lead to confusion among the members. I spent a lot of time working with them in January including a Saturday debating this man. The church has decided to move from his house as soon as a new place can be located.

In the Save region, we attendance at two assemblies came down simply because their meeting places had been blown away in a rain storm towards the end of the year.

Please pray for us regarding information on this first page. We need it. We have our ups and downs in 2007.

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Now, I would briefly mention work in the regions and the main players in a global review. The work here is truly a team work but it is impossible to mention all the players in one report. If there is any credit, we are willing to share that equally.

Reports from the six regions mentioned above indicate that our work has grown to 50 congregations with an estimated membership of between 2400 and 2500. *(There are probably some more churches of Christ in Benin established by American missionaries working in the south-western part of Benin. We do not work together so I do not know anything about their congregations.)*

At the risk of boring you with our strange Benin names I want to list for the records the names of towns and villages in which we have established churches of Christ in Benin as at 2007.

ATLANTIC REGION

Comprising Cotonou and surrounding towns and villages: We have 12 congregations; Vedoko, Agla, St Michel, Atropokonji, Calavi, Sedje, Akpakpa-Agbalinlame, Akpakpa-Agbodjedo, Zinvie, Kpe, Lanzron, and Ouida.

ALLADA REGION

They reported 7 congregations. Allada, Todi-Agossouko, Todi-Cada, Todi-Hekandji, Ze, Hinvi and Agon. Presently the work in this region is led by several BTC graduates including Telefon Pierre and Marc Kagbagnon. Upon graduation both of these men left the Church because they felt we have doctrinal problems mainly because of some books they have read. It did not take them long to come back confessing that they were wrong and that the denominations they went to ignore completely Bible teachings. One was allured with miracles and came back more convinced about Bible teaching on miracles.

MONO REGION

They listed 7 congregations. Se, Come, Linzenme, Azove, Akodeha, Agoe, and Nyito. The last two congregations were established in 2007 by BTC graduates that graduated in May 2007. The work in this area, led by Jean Kado is also a great source of encouragement. If I were a Paul, Kado would have been my Timothy. Kado became a part of my family as a young man

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disowned by his family when he converted to Christianity from idol worship in 1989 while I was working in Togo. He was then being groomed to take over as the chief priest of the family idols. He took the Bible correspondence course in French from Verviers, Belgium and I was sent to baptize him. We took him into our home. When I was coming to Benin he abandoned his refrigeration work to follow me. He enrolled in BTC and upon graduation started by planting a church in Come in 1997. He had 5 congregations started as a result of his work. Kado is married with three children. *See picture on page 3.*

OUEME REGION

This is virtually a new work and they are stretching me as they keep coming back asking for more and more resources. We have 9 congregations in this region. So far, one of the fastest growing works. They have congregations in Akonaboe, Ekpe, Malee, Kokmolu, Dooke, Danme, Sekou, Agbomasse and Tchaada.

Brother Esperance Mensah graduated from BTC in 1997 and moved from Cotonou to Porto Novo in 2000. He started a small church in a wealthy part of the city. The meeting place was the laughing stock of the people who live there. The work was difficult, after 5 years we have only one congregation in Akonaboe so we asked him to come back to Cotonou in 2005. However after Esperance left, the seed he had planted started growing when Innocent Ahouanhou threw into our lap a leadership training school that he had started. Esperance also got two of his first converts to BTC. These men graduated from BTC in 2007 and 9 from the BTC annex in Tchaada. The workload of Esperance has doubled so his responsibilities in the Porto Novo area are now shifted to Brother Christian Todego. He does the lion's share of the teaching in the school in Tchaada until we can get him help.

PARAKOU REGION

The work in the northern region of Benin started in 2000 when a young man by name Honore Balley who we never met before came and told us he has started a Church of Christ in Beterou and needed our help. We responded immediately and finally got him to BTC. Brother Balley is now working in Niamey, Mali as a missionary. His departure led to the death of the Beterou

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church which is now revived. We got several baptisms including Brother Daniel Barka who graduated from BTC in 2005. He is now leading the work there. We now have 5 congregations. Beterou, Wari-marou, Sinaou, Parakou and N'dali. Parakou and N'dali are new works as a result of Daniel and Theophilus. Plans are for Daniel to move from Sinau, 30 miles east of Parakou to Parakou which is the regional capital and be at the center of the activities in that area. Daniel's report estimates 200 members in 5 congregations. This area of Benin is heavily influenced by Moslems and animists. Your prayers for Daniel and his fellow workers in this region are highly coveted. Daniel is beginning a preaching point in the village of Sirarou where we had a fatal accident. I have already received phone calls from the village about the availability of property for sale for us to put up a church building. Exciting things are happening.

SAVE REGION

Paul Tohionon continues to lead this work assisted by Pascal Djedatin in the central part of Benin. The problems he reported are the excommunication of one of the local preachers and that two meeting places had been blown down by a rainstorm and the need for more workers. Two men from the region are in school training to serve the Lord in that region.

The congregations listed are in Save, Dassa, Saklogbo, Paouignan, Dani, Tchakpa, Besse, Boubou Pompe, Gbere and Kaboua.

REPORT FROM BURKINA FASO

There are works going on in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso with which two of our graduates are associated. Paul Ishmael Ilboudo, one of the two sent this report.

Report of activities of the Churches in Patte d'Oie and Kilwin.

We had our lows and downs in 2007. On the spiritual life of our members, we did not have too many problems. However one of our members had problems with another person that we quickly resolved. One of our members who is from Togo died of Meningitis. (The churches in Ouagadougou are composed of members from Ghana, Togo and Burkina Faso). I work with the church in Kilwin and Patte d'Oie. Both congregations want me to be at the services that take place at the same time on Sunday morning. If we assign others to preach, some members

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would be absent with the excuse that the brother's teaching is not edifying to them. We are now forced to combine the two congregations. Since we combined the two groups, we now have 20 to 27 in worship on Sundays.

We still have economic problems. One reason the Kilwin church agree to merge with the other one is that we cannot afford the rent. We have a one year contract and pay \$136 for the meeting place. All our giving goes to pay for the rent. Since most of the properties are owned by Muslims, they refuse to rent it out to us to use for Christian worship services. That is why we need our own property to avoid all these inconveniences. We continue to do door to door evangelism and visits to our members who are regularly absent.

RADIO MINISTRY

We have now gone live. We preach for just 20 minutes and leave 10 minutes for questions from the audience. We wish we can have some more minutes for this exciting work. We continue to thank World Radio for partnering us in this work.



Excited Brother Jean Kado and his wife with Ed and Judy Jones with their new motorcycle

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